

marketing loan rate, which I have discussed and which I think we need to revisit, as the single best strategy available to us to address the issue of inadequate prices in the grain sector. It would lift these caps and extend the loan terms from 9 to 15 months. I think it would have an enormously positive economic impact all across rural America.

Second, it would tie our relief to production agriculture, which I think is important.

There is an alternative disaster package being talked about currently that would amount to augmenting the transition payments for producers—actually not the producers so much as it would be for landowners.

I applaud all efforts to go forward. I am not going to make the perfect the enemy of the good. I think there is urgency here that is critical. We need to proceed in an expeditious fashion as much as possible. I understand it may involve some give and take and will involve some of each side's strategy. But when I look at what the uncapping of the loan rates would do, even at this modest level, it is clear to me that it is a superior alternative.

The wheat price, which is currently capped at \$2.58 per bushel under the Democratic plan, goes to \$3.22. That is up 64 cents per bushel. That is under the Democratic plan and the plan proposed by the Clinton administration.

The alternative to that through the AMTA payments, if you were to equate it on a per bushel basis, would be not a 64-cent increase but a 23-cent increase.

On corn, the current cap is at \$1.89. The Democratic proposal would increase that to \$2.25, up 36 cents. The alternative through the AMTA payment increase would equate to about a 10-cent increase rather than a 36-cent increase.

The soybean cap would be increased modestly—from \$5.26 per bushel to \$5.33 a bushel, up 7 cents. But under the alternative AMTA approach, soybean producers would stand a chance of getting nothing if their soybeans were not planted on former base acreages.

The AMTA augmentation also suffers from the problem of what to do about renters. Some 43 percent of the crops being grown in America are being grown by farmers on rented land. It has been our experience in the past that if we do the AMTA payment approach, there may be a great many instances where the money will go exclusively to the landowner but nothing to the farmer who actually is growing the crop.

The Freedom to Farm legislation touted in the 1996 farm bill delivered planting and management flexibility to farmers. They have been able to take care of that flexibility. I think that has been positive. It has been a positive step in the right direction. I applaud that. No one is suggesting that we back up and retreat from that level of flexibility, that we back into some sort of micromanaged world out of Washington.

But the fact is when Freedom to Farm passed, wheat prices were nearly \$6; not gaining—around \$2 in many parts of the country. Corn was in the \$3 range. It is far less than that; it is in the \$1 range now.

Circumstances have changed. Many of us would say, "I told you so." There is a certain amount of foreseeability that those prices were not going to stay at that high level in perpetuity. Now we find that with Freedom to Farm, although it contains some positive things, it is, frankly, grossly inadequate in terms of providing the safety net, providing some kind of stability for family producers.

Now we find that declining transition payments and then ultimately a pat on the back and a "good luck," reducing America's commitment to family agriculture from \$26 billion at a high water mark over a decade ago to \$5 billion and ultimately to nothing, while our European allies spend \$50 billion to sustain agriculture there, because they know what it is like to be hungry, puts U.S. producers at an incredible disadvantage.

It is my hope, again, that we will find the bipartisan will to deal with this in an urgent manner in the coming week or two of this Congress. The administration and the Democratic proposal, on top of these past efforts at meat labeling, price transparency, disaster payments and raising the marketing loan cap—which, by the way, is a marketing loan and not the kind of loan that results in massive grain buildup in supplies and inventory we suffered under in previous years—this disaster package also includes significant funds for Farm Service Administration operating loans for producers who have been hit by a disaster, for land compensation for flooded lands, for payment for crop losses on uninsured crops and for the additional FSA county staff support that will be necessary to implement all of this in an effective and efficient manner.

The bottom line, in my view, is price. We need to address both, however—the long-term strategy of what to do about price, as well as the short-term cash flow crisis that we have in rural America.

I believe that the previous package which was adopted only in part took us a long ways in the right direction. The current package, which was announced this morning by the administration, by Senator DASCHLE and Senator HARKIN, I think moves us far beyond the debate that has taken place so far. It is far more constructive. It is far more helpful as we deal with this crisis in rural America.

I again applaud Senator DASCHLE's extraordinary leadership, the work of Senator HARKIN and other members of the Ag Committee, Secretary Glickman and the Clinton administration for focusing with this kind of intensity in a timely manner on what needs to be done relative to American agriculture this year; not next year, not 5 years down the road, but this year.

I am hopeful, again, that the conferees will evaluate this proposal with the greatest amount of care and earnestness, and that when we adjourn this coming October, we will, in fact, have addressed this issue in a bipartisan fashion and in a cost-efficient fashion in this body and that it will be on the President's desk and that the President will have an opportunity to sign ag disaster legislation which, in fact, is meaningful and timely and sufficient to get our family producers down the road into another productive year in the coming planting season.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KYL). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield myself all of the time remaining on the Democratic side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

#### TRIBUTE TO SENATOR MURIEL HUMPHREY BROWN

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, Muriel Humphrey Brown was an outstanding woman, and all of us who knew her and had the opportunity to serve with her in the Senate mourn her loss today. The people of Minnesota have lost one of their finest public servants, and this country has lost one of its finest crusaders.

Muriel was an outstanding campaigner for her husband, Hubert Humphrey, who was a great Senator himself, and a great Vice President too. Together, they made an extraordinary team. She was the soft-spoken, gentle, guiding force behind Hubert's mayoral, Senatorial, Vice Presidential and Presidential campaigns. In fact, Muriel changed the rules of Presidential campaigning by becoming one of the first wives to speak out by herself on the Presidential campaign trail. Muriel's eloquence and wisdom could still be heard in recent days, as she celebrated the victory of her son, Skip, in the primary last week in his campaign to become the next Governor of Minnesota.

Muriel was an eloquent activist in her own right. She became the twelfth woman to serve in the U.S. Senate, when she was appointed in 1978 to complete the unexpired term of her husband. During her service in the Senate that year, Muriel's courage, wisdom, and ability enabled her to carry on the high ideals and important social programs of her husband.

She was an able leader on issues important to women, and her vigorous support for legislation to extend the deadline for States to ratify the equal rights amendment was a major step

forward for women's rights throughout the Nation.

As a member of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, Muriel introduced civil service reform amendments to protect employees who provided information on illegal Government activities and mismanagement. Her proposals became the foundation for the well-known "whistleblower" protections that employees have today.

Muriel also actively supported the passage of the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Amendments in 1978, which provided a wide range of new services for the handicapped and the retarded. Prior to her service in the Senate, she became a leading crusader for the disabled.

She had served on a committee for mental retardation during the administration of President Johnson, and she encouraged many reforms to improve mental health and care for the mentally ill.

And above all else, Muriel Humphrey was deeply committed to the enactment of the Humphrey-Hawkins full employment bill. Its goal was to do more to reduce unemployment in communities across the country, and the enactment of this legislation was a major accomplishment for Muriel and the entire Nation.

In every respect, Muriel was a wonderful wife, mother, Senator and leader. She served the American people for 34 years as the wife of our distinguished colleague, Hubert Humphrey, and also in her own right as a highly respected Member of the Senate. She had a remarkable grasp of the issues and a genuine interest in helping others. She earned the respect and admiration of all of us who had the privilege to serve with her, and her spirit and courage and determination will be long remembered by the American people.

My thoughts and prayers are with the Humphrey family. America has lost a unique leader, and the Kennedy family has lost a wonderful friend.

#### MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, on another matter, on tomorrow we will have an opportunity to address the issue of an increase in the minimum wage for working Americans, at 2:15 p.m. Starting at 10:30 in the morning, the amendment will be before the U.S. Senate, and we will have that opportunity, with the time equally divided before the luncheon break, to make the case for the increase in the minimum wage for working Americans, those who are on the lower rung of the economic ladder.

This afternoon, in the time which is available, I would like to anticipate and respond to a number of our colleagues who will raise questions about whether it is appropriate to increase the minimum wage at this time.

Throughout the history of the minimum wage, our opponents have claimed that raising the minimum

wage will add to the rate of inflation. Those who oppose fair increases in the wages for working families also claim that unemployment will increase among the workers in this country and, therefore, be counterproductive to the various people we are trying to help.

We have raised it on five different occasions since the end of World War II. So it is fair enough for us to look back on the history of the increases in the minimum wage to find out if there is validity to those particular arguments. And, quite clearly, those arguments have to fail on their face. And I will have an opportunity briefly this afternoon and in a more detailed way to respond to these arguments on tomorrow.

But a basic, fundamental point, Mr. President, that is at the heart of this whole issue is whether we in this country really honor work and whether we think that Americans who work 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year ought to live in poverty, that they ought to live in poverty and that their children should live in poverty.

As Americans, we have experienced the most extraordinary economic growth over the period of the last 6 years, with economic growth, price stability, low interest rates, low rates of inflation, declining unemployment. We are also experiencing the longest period of economic growth and price stability in the history of this Nation.

I think we were reminded a week or so ago when we found out that the stock market went down some 300 points. People were saying we lost \$1 trillion in terms of value, and then it bounced back the next day. We see these extraordinary fluctuations. We see the extraordinary creation of wealth in just about every population, except for the low-income, working families in this Nation. They have not been a part of the growth of economic prosperity.

If we look at what happened in this country in the immediate post-war period, from 1948 into the late 1950s through the 1960s, and actually up to 1972. If we divided the economic incomes into what they call quintiles and divide by five, and look at the relative growth in terms of income over a 30-year period, in the post-war period where we had times of recession, inflation, a variety of economic shocks, we come to one very basic and fundamental conclusion. All of those quintiles went up, and went up together. There was merely a 5-point or 10-point percent difference between those at one level and those at another level. All Americans went up together. The rising tide raised all the boats. We did not have this period of economic growth and price stability.

What has happened in the more recent times? In more recent times we have seen the enormous accumulation of wealth among the most fortunate individuals in this country and the wealthiest corporations and an actual

decline in the purchasing power of the minimum wage workers. They have been the big losers. They haven't just been holding steady, they have lost in terms of purchasing power.

We have an opportunity tomorrow to say whether this is fair, right here in the United States of America, among our fellow citizens who are working hard and trying to provide for their families and have hopes and dreams like every Member of this body.

It is interesting that just this last year Members in the U.S. Senate accumulated, with our rate of inflation on our own salaries, the equivalent of more than \$1.50 per hour in 1 year. Do we understand that? Every Member in this body this last year got an increase of more than \$1.50 an hour. And they all effectively took it.

We are talking about the men and women in this country who work as teachers' aides, in nursing homes, and who clean these facilities that we have here in buildings all across America. They are also child care workers or assistants to children. We are asking to provide these workers an increase of 50 cents in January and 50 cents the following year.

We, in the Senate, have taken \$1.50 for ourselves, and I didn't hear many voices in opposition to that. But we will hear a lot of opposition tomorrow about providing 50 cents for these hard-working Americans next year, and 50 cents the following year. We will hear opposition and we will have a vote here in the U.S. Senate. I will be frank and say it is still an uphill battle. We are continuing to make that case, and we are hopeful we will be successful.

How can we possibly justify voting ourselves \$1.50 more an hour, but not for the child care workers, not for the teacher assistants, not for those working in nursing homes and looking after our parents? Why? Because they will say they are worried about inflation and are worried about the impact of the increase of the minimum wage on our total economy—an \$8 trillion total economy. Ten million Americans will get the equivalent of another \$1, spread over a 2-year period. The proposed increases in the minimum wage would amount to a tiny fraction of our total economy.

We are going to hear from some who will say we cannot afford it because it will be an inflator in terms of our economy. It wasn't an inflator when we had an increase for ourselves, but it will be an inflator if we are going to provide the increase for these working families. Many are working, single mothers who are trying to provide for their children. Sixty percent are women who have two or three jobs to try to provide for their families.

We hear a lot on the floor of the U.S. Senate about family values. What about that mother who doesn't have the time to spend with that child on their homework or doesn't have the time to take that child for a walk in the park on a Sunday because they